

Vision, Values & Goals

As the 150 members of the Community Partners Group gathered for their initial meeting, there was skepticism that key stakeholder groups could break down their traditional barriers and arrive at a common vision for the future of the Empowerment Zone. At first, some of the values that were expressed seemed irreconcilable. As dialogue continued throughout the planning process, however, it was clear that there were not necessarily mutually exclusive values, but instead a set of values that complimented each other.

For example, discussion of the light rail system raised concerns on the part of some neighborhood residents that construction of the project would cause displacement of Zone residents. Private sector and government stakeholders viewed the light rail not only as a way to improve access to regional employment and services, but also as a stimulus for neighborhood economic development near transfer centers in the Zone. The plan eventually incorporated all of these perspectives, maximizing the benefits of the light rail, while assuring neighborhood participation in project planning to avoid negative impacts on Zone residents.

The values of each of the stakeholder groups, taken as a whole, formed the basis for the vision, goals and implementation strategy. They were articulated most clearly in the principles of the Cincinnati Empowerment Corporation, the Zone governance structure (see sidebar). The following summarize these core values:

- **Zone Neighborhoods**
 - The community should have a strong voice in Zone policy and resource allocation.
 - Economic benefits of programs should go to Zone residents, businesses and organizations.
 - Programs should not result in displacement of residents.
- **Business Community**
 - Resources should be used effectively and responsibly.
 - Programs should have demonstrable outcomes.
- **City Government**
 - There should be meaningful participation by the private sector.
 - Programs should reach those persons with the greatest barriers to success.

*A Statement of Values:
Principals of the Cincinnati
Empowerment Corporation*

*The board of the CEC will
conduct business based on
the following principles:*

- *Inclusion*
- *Equality*
- *Community driven*
- *Super majority decision making*
- *Voluntarism*
- *Objectivity*
- *Efficiency*
- *Community ownership*
- *Unity*
- *Common understanding*
- *Continuity*
- *Deliverability*
- *Accountability*
- *Sustainability*

- **Service Providers**

- Programs should build on the capacity of existing programs and organizations.
- Programs should address the whole person and whole family.

Vision of the Future

The strategic plan for the Cincinnati Empowerment Zone was developed by the Community Partners Group, which included residents, businesses and organizations from the Empowerment Zone neighborhoods, as well as governments, businesses, institutions, associations, service providers and philanthropic organizations from the broader community. The group organized its work around four issue areas. A committee was formed to develop goals, strategies and programs for each of these areas, and each committee developed a vision statement.

Committee Visions

1. Economic and Workforce Development

We envision a community that can secure its economic future by building personal and community wealth. We believe that the key to economic opportunity is the development of personal and community assets that provide a strong economic base in the community and across the Greater Cincinnati region. To that end, we seek to develop and strengthen our economic foundation and to connect our community to the greater regional and global economy.

2. Housing and Neighborhood Environment

We envision a vibrant, self-sustaining community that is desirable, accessible and provides a stable and diverse living environment, in which people want to live, work, shop and play.

3. Individual and Family Well-Being

We envision capable, socially responsible, confident children who are part of stable, economically self-sufficient families. These families are empowered by a strong sense of community and have the support of neighborhood institutions providing opportunities for

quality health and education, moral development and personal safety.

4. Civic Infrastructure

We envision a wall-less “community of unity,” providing opportunities that engage citizens to mobilize their potential and abilities for building a community of culture.

Community Partners Vision

At their final planning meeting, the entire Community Partners Group discussed, finalized and endorsed a common vision for the Cincinnati Empowerment Zone strategic plan. The vision incorporates the values that are important to the Community Partners, including the significant need for economic and social progress for Zone residents and the potential partnership opportunities in the Cincinnati region. It also recognizes Cincinnati’s historic position as an important conduit for those seeking freedom and prosperity. This vision statement focuses the collective work of the community on a tangible picture of a desirable future for the Empowerment Zone:

Theme: *Partners Building Pathways to Prosperity While Leaving No One Behind*

Vision: *We envision a vibrant and self-sustaining “community of unity” in which well-educated children and families can develop and mobilize their potential and secure their future by building personal and community wealth.*

The vision of the Cincinnati Empowerment Zone is one of economic opportunity through development of individual and community assets to their fullest potential. It envisions self-sufficiency through well-educated, healthy and stable families, and the accumulation of personal wealth. Lastly, by creating a foundation of safe, vibrant neighborhoods, a strong sense of community, and connections to the region, the vision promotes sustainable development for the Zone.

Goals and Strategies

The committees of the Community Partners Group were concerned that the goals and strategies created a clear path to follow in designing programs. They debated and modified goals and strategies during their first two meetings. The following is the comprehensive package they developed to guide the implementation of the strategic plan over the next ten years.

The values, vision, goals and strategies provide the basis for the package of programs detailed in the Implementation Plan. The goals describe what Cincinnati wishes to achieve over the next ten years, while the strategies provide the bridge to innovative and effective programs.

Although grouped by the four issue areas, there are clear linkages among the programs, which are identified in the program descriptions. Most incorporate several strategies, and a number of the programs help to achieve more than one goal. This is consistent with the vision of the Community Partners Group that multiple “pathways to prosperity” are needed to achieve empowerment and sustainable development for all Zone residents.

Economic and Workforce Development

The goals and strategies for Economic and Workforce Development focus on four facets of economic empowerment. These include business development and ownership within the Zone; use of the Zone’s physical development resources; linkages between the Zone and regional economy; and developing the Zone workforce.

The underlying value expressed through these goals and strategies was for Zone residents and businesses to gain the means for greater control of their economic destiny. The following are the specific goals and strategies:

Goal 1. Develop and strengthen businesses within the Zone

Strategies:

- a) Stimulate minority business ownership, development, and expansion

- b) Enhance the growth of micro-enterprises
- c) Improve the competitiveness of manufacturers and other businesses
- d) Revitalize neighborhood business districts
- e) Facilitate cooperative and employee-owned businesses
- f) Assist in the acquisition and redevelopment of business locations within the Zone

Goal 2. Encourage the Productive Use of Key Zone Assets

Strategies:

- a) Assist key Zone employers to grow and expand
- b) Prepare underutilized sites/buildings for development
- c) Promote the favorable business climate of the Zone

Goal 3. Connect the Zone to the Regional/Global Economy

Strategies:

- a) Improve transportation access within the Zone and to the region
- b) Expand communication technologies for Zone residents and businesses
- c) Increase supplier/contract opportunities for Zone businesses

Goal 4. Assist Zone Residents to Obtain and Keep Career Employment

Strategies:

- a) Enhance the opportunities for Zone residents to obtain employment with key Zone and regional employers
- b) Expand the availability of job training resources and target emerging technologies
- c) Assist “special needs” residents in preparing for and keeping employment
- d) Promote “life-long” learning and career advancement
- e) Support the transition of Zone residents from welfare to work, including the hard-to-serve

The goals and strategies led to the development of the following Nine-Point Program for Economic

and Workforce Development detailed in the Implementation Plan:

- The Zone Economic Empowerment Center to provide a full range of capital and technical assistance for Zone business development and expansion;
- The Zone Access Program to increase supplier opportunities for Zone businesses;
- “Wire the Zone” to enhance telecommunication linkages of Zone businesses and institutions;
- The E.Z. Rider Connector Program to improve transportation services that connect zone residents and workers to the region;
- Partnership for Workforce Competitiveness, which secures employer hiring commitments to provide Zone residents with economic opportunities;
- Sector-Based Training Initiative, which provides short-term and career development skills training for key sectors of the regional economy;
- The Brownfields Redevelopment Initiative to remediate and develop underutilized industrial and commercial sites within the Zone;
- Community Bridges, which markets Zone assets and businesses and established forums for communication between residents and institutional employers; and
- Preparing and Employing the Hard-to-Serve, to direct resources to assisting Zone residents with special needs to become job-ready.

Housing and Neighborhood Environment

The goals and strategies for Housing and Neighborhood Environment focus on ways to enhance the components of the physical environment in which Zone residents live. These include providing a range of quality housing types; investing in capital improvements and enhancing the appearance of neighborhoods; and providing opportunities for residents to celebrate their history and culture.

These goals and strategies build on the fundamental values of residential property ownership and shared responsibility for taking care of the neighborhood environment. The following are the specific goals and strategies:

Goal 1. Provide Quality Housing in the Zone to Meet the Life-Cycle Needs of all Types of Households

Strategies:

- a) Assist Zone residents to become homebuyers
- b) Improve the condition of the owner and renter housing stock in the Zone
- c) Attract market-rate housing development and homebuyers
- d) Provide affordable housing for Zone residents with special needs

Goal 2. Enhance the Market Competitiveness of the Zone for Housing, Businesses and Services

Strategies:

- a) Upgrade Zone infrastructure and public facilities
- b) Remove blighting influences in the Zone environment
- c) Improve land use relationships within the Zone
- d) Improve transportation to and within the Zone

Goal 3. Increase Opportunities for Residents to Celebrate the Past, Present and Future of Zone Neighborhoods

Strategies:

- a) Preserve the unique historic character of structures within the Zone
- b) Celebrate the cultural heritage of Zone residents
- c) Increase community recreation opportunities within the Zone

The goals and strategies led to the development of the following Six-Point Program for Housing and Neighborhood Environment detailed in the Implementation Plan:

- Asset Building Through Home Ownership, which provides capital and information for home ownership and equity development;
- A Home for Everyone, to assure quality rental housing for very low-income residents and persons with special needs;
- No Place Like Home, which provide resources for resident development of neighborhood plans and neighborhood beautification activities;
- The Property Clearinghouse, to monitor and acquire tax delinquent properties for productive reuse;
- Zone Capital Improvements and Capital Investment, to target resources for public and institutional capital projects within the Zone; and
- Polishing Our Gems, which provides resources for restoration and adaptive reuse of historic structures in the Zone.

Individual and Family Well-Being

The goals and strategies for Individual and Family Well-Being focus on ways to improve the health, education and safety of Zone residents. These include enhancing the health of children and families; supporting the positive development of youth; and delivering coordinated and holistic services.

Important to these goals and strategies are the values of early intervention and prevention and service providers working collaboratively. The following are the specific goals and strategies:

Goal 1. Enhance the Development of Zone Children

Strategies:

- a) Improve access to health care services for children
- b) Provide quality pre-schools and primary schools
- c) Increase community support for Zone parents and families

Goal 2. Assist Youth (Adolescents and Teens) to Develop Life-Skills for a Successful Future

Strategies:

- a) Establish excellent, comprehensive middle school and high school education systems.
- b) Provide Zone youth with access to employment and career opportunities
- c) Focus community resources on supporting positive youth activities and reducing risks faced by youth.

Goal 3. Coordinate Services to Meet the Needs of the Whole Person

Strategies:

- a) Create a safe environment within the Zone.
- b) Establish community-based, family-centered service delivery models.
- c) Meet the physical and mental health needs of Zone residents.

The goals and strategies led to the development of the following Four-Point Program for Individual and Family Well-Being detailed in the Implementation Plan:

- Early Life Enrichment, which establishes an outreach network in the Zone to work with children and families in need of health and/or social services;
- The Total School Partnership, to improve the quality of education and establish schools as family-friendly community resources for programs and services;
- The Youth Capacity and Resource Building Coalition, to help Zone youth age 13-18 to establish positive goals and successfully compete in the world of work; and
- The Campaign for a Safe Community, which creates a partnership between the community and police that empowers residents to help create safe Zone neighborhoods.

Civic Infrastructure

The goals and strategies for Civic Infrastructure focus on ways to engage Zone residents and organizations in the civic life of their community. These include building the capacity of individuals and organizations to fully participate and achieve their goals; increasing the involvement of the faith community; enhancing access to arts and cultural activities; and accessing community-wide resources.

All of these goals were established with the values of empowering residents, strengthening the sense of community within the Zone, and building relationships with others in the Cincinnati region. The following are the specific goals and strategies:

Goal 1. Empower Zone Residents and Organizations to Take Responsibility for the Comprehensive Development of their Neighborhoods

Strategies:

- a) Enhance the capacity of Zone residents and organizations for civic participation
- b) Strengthen the connection of Zone residents to community governance structures
- c) Support community activists to create, expand and utilize channels of communications in the Zone
- d) Provide children and youth training to take active roles in community visioning by providing leadership and civic participation within the Zone and across the region
- e) Utilize resident's skills to create the goal.
More trainers of adult education

Goal 2. Increase the Involvement of the Faith Community in Addressing the Development Needs and Opportunities of the Zone

Strategies:

- a) Engage leadership of faith-based organizations in enhancing the activities of Zone residents
- b) Target innovative social service and community-based development, including economic development and economic justice activities, to the Zone

- c) Use the strengths of faith organizations to work collaboratively with Zone residents to create Zone activities.

Goal 3. Harness the Energies of the Arts, Culture and Communications Media for Community Building and Economic Development in the Zone

Strategies:

- a) Increase the capacity of Zone residents to create community cultural activities and celebrations.
- b) Increase the access of Zone residents to communications media and their capacity to use media for community building activities
- c) Market Zone arts and cultural activities to the region as a strategy for increasing Zone economic development
- d) Increase the participation of major arts and cultural organizations within the Zone in the economic development of Zone neighborhoods
- e) Increase the access of Zone residents to regional arts and cultural resources

4. To Focus Community-wide Resources on the Needs of the Zone

- a) Increase the capacity of residents within the Zone to mobilize volunteer resources within and outside of the Zone.
- b) Develop partnerships between the Zone and key regional institutions.

The goals and strategies led to the development of the following Five-Point Program for Civic Infrastructure detailed in the Implementation Plan:

- Neighborhood Engagement Training and Assistance, which serves as the community training and capacity building program for the Zone;
- Faith in Community, to engage religious organizations in partnerships to implement Zone activities;
- The Community Media and Marketing Center, to provide Zone residents and

businesses with access to self-help media equipment and services;

- Arts for All, which will enhance Zone access to and participation in community cultural and arts activities; and
- The Urban Workforce Exchange, which uses the workplace as a forum for finding common ground among employers and workers with cultural differences.